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Contacts: Miles McEvoy (360) 902-1924

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-256
<http://www.wa.gov/agr/>

Proposed rules update organic livestock standards

OLYMPIA — This proposal updates the standards for feed, antibiotics and hormones used in organic livestock, dairy and egg production. Public comment on the proposed changes will be heard at 1 p.m. Nov. 10, in Room 259 of the Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington St. in Olympia.

“Current standards are not detailed enough,” said Miles McEvoy, organic program manager at Department of Agriculture. “Vague references requiring access to fresh air and daylight are replaced with specific space requirements for organic poultry and access to pasture for other organic livestock.”

Organic farming is one of the fastest growing agricultural industries in the state. There now are 300 certified organic farms in the state. That number has risen 33 percent in the last three years.

“Changing lifestyles and the demand for more natural foods have driven the increase in the number of farms,” McEvoy said. “Organic farming is quite lucrative. For example, organic milk sells for \$16.50 to \$21.20 per hundredweight compared to \$11.77 - \$12.97 for conventional milk.”

The proposed standards for bovine animals, swine, goats and sheep prohibit the use of antibiotics and hormones; and require organic feed for at least 12 months prior to slaughter. The organic dairy standards require organic feed and no antibiotics for at least three months prior to organic milk production. They also prohibit the use of hormones such as BST (bovine growth hormone).

Both the organic meat and dairy standards require that animals have access to organic pasture or range. The organic poultry standards require organic feed, prohibit the use of antibiotics and hormones and require at least four square feet of living space per bird.

Written testimony will be accepted until 5 p.m. November 10.

For more information, or a copy of the proposed rules, contact Miles McEvoy at (360) 902-1924, FAX (360) 902-2087, internet: mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov; or write to Department of Agriculture, Organic Food Program, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504-2560.

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Note to editors: Proposed changes to the organic livestock rules are below. For more information, contact Miles McEvoy at (360) 902-1924.

	Current standard	Proposed change
DAIRY		
Feed	Undefined	Requires 100% organic feed for 3 months prior to milk production
Antibiotics	30 day withdrawal	90 day withdrawal
Hormones	prohibited	prohibited
Living conditions	Required access to fresh air and daylight	Requires access to organic pasture for at least one year prior to milk production
POULTRY		
Feed	Undefined	Requires 100% organic feed from one day old chicks to slaughter or egg production.
Antibiotics	prohibited	prohibited
Hormones	prohibited	prohibited
Living conditions	Required access to fresh air and daylight	Requires either a movable pen system or four square feet per bird and access to the outside.
OTHER LIVESTOCK (BEEF, PORK, LAMB, ETC.)		
Feed	Undefined	Requires 100% organic feed for 12 months prior to slaughter
Antibiotics	prohibited for 12 months prior to slaughter	prohibited for 12 months prior to slaughter
Hormones	prohibited	prohibited
Living conditions	Required access to fresh air and daylight	Requires access to organic pasture or range for at least 12 months prior to slaughter, allows animals to be kept in feedlot for up to 90 days.
OTHER PROVISIONS		
Emergency Feed	Not addressed	Allows non-organic feed to be used in emergency situations when organic feed is unavailable
Feed additives	Not addressed	Allows vitamins and minerals, prohibits animal byproducts.